

Interim's Corner

A Brief Description of Area Ministry

By Rev. Won-Jae Hur

Someone asked me, "What is Area Ministry?" I said, "I don't know." The person looked puzzled and asked, "Isn't that part of your job?"

Yes, it is. Of course I understand the general concept of Area Ministry. What I meant was that I don't know what the programmatic content of Area Ministry looks like. In fact, I shouldn't know. Area Ministry is not a program, prepackaged and ready to be implemented. It is closer to a paradigm that offers a different perspective on how the church can faithfully respond to the call of the present moment. Instead of offering a "technical fix" to the challenges and needs of our environment, Area Ministry calls for new learning and new ways of being church in the contemporary social context.

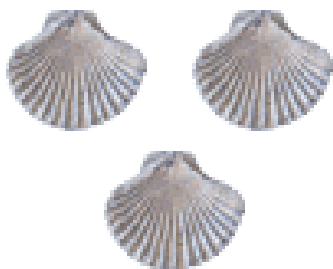
Here is the working definition of Area Ministry: "A mission strategy for organizing ministries of the diocese into more vital and creative agents of transformation. Through careful discernment and outreach, Area Ministry teams identify neighborhood challenges and seek innovative contemporary solutions. Building on the ancient catholic understanding of 'parish' as a geographic designation, Area Ministry leverages resources by bringing churches, institutions, and people together. Area Ministry leads spiritual growth and fresh expressions of mission and ministry, both inside and outside the church. Area Ministry is mission directed outward." (www.diocal.org, under Resources).

Area Ministry needs to grow organically from the people and communities involved. The leaders of our diocese offer principles and practices that establish the parameters of this vision. We are invited to reflect on these things and to participate in making Area Ministry a reality in our communities.

Let me give a summary of Area Ministry principles and practices as presented in the recent Diocesan workshop, "Sowing the Seeds." Several hundred participants gathered to listen to speakers, watch media presentations, and hold discussions in small round-table groups. Bishop Marc Andrus opened the workshop by placing Area Ministry in the context of a widely felt longing for community and the challenge of creating it in our consumerist society. The Rev. Sue Singer, assistant professor at CDSP, then introduced the history, theology, and skill sets of Area Ministry. Some key values and practices of Area Ministry that both speakers explained were diverse ministry teams, discernment of community needs, innovation (including technology and other tools), collaboration on multiple levels, and spiritual growth leading to fresh expressions of church. We discussed these values and practices as *the "three norms" of Area Ministry*.

1. Diversity from the Outset. From the very beginning, Area Ministry teams comprise people of different races, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, and ability. Diversity is built in to the ministry team.

2. Collaboration. Area Ministry is geographic, including both the local congregation and the wider community of neighborhood and city. Teams connect with residents, other



Celebrate Our Saint!

Feast of St. James, Sunday July 26th

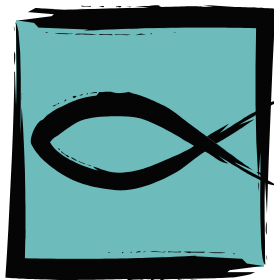
Parish Picnic following the 10 a.m. service

Watch the Weekly News for details!

churches, and organizations in order to collaborate in meeting community needs. Area Ministry teams work to identify those needs using skills drawn from community organizing and other grassroots discernment resources. In the process, they create intentional, collaborative relationships with other churches and organizations to meet the identified needs. Collaboration includes ways of thinking, leveraging resources, and meeting the longing for community. One example of an organization that churches can and do work with is Episcopal Charities, whose action networks support local projects that are focused and collaborative.

3. Embeddedness in Community. Area Ministry always grows out of intentional formation in community. Teams do not simply work together. They walk the path of spiritual formation together, sharing spiritual practices in order to nurture their faith and vocation. Teams are invited to create and live into a “Rule of Life.” This term is borrowed from the monastic tradition, where communities live according to a common rhythm of worship, prayer, and work. Area Ministry teams adopt this ancient tool to identify helpful spiritual practices and grow together as intentional Christian communities.

Why is Area Ministry important? I think many traditional church structures and practices do not connect with the values and realities of people’s lives today. Although some fundamental aspects of church life will not change (i.e., study of Scripture, Sacramental life, forms of fellowship), it seems clear to me that new forms must emerge in order for the church to respond to what the future asks of us. Churches accepting the invitation to Area Ministry have a set of principles and practices that creatively reflect the Gospel to guide them as they discern how to incarnate this vision in their communities. There is still a lot of ambiguity about how all this will take shape on the ground. Yet I believe that Area Ministry provides the vision, insights, and tools for churches to respond to the complex challenges of our time. It can equip us to be “people of the moment.”¹ The invitation is there for us to explore.



¹ I am paraphrasing Richard Meux Benson, founder of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Anglican-Episcopal monastic community with houses now in the UK and Cambridge, Massachusetts. He called the Society to be “men of the moment.”

From Our Senior Warden

By Doreen Canton

June 6th was such a wonderful day. The sun shone, and the splendor of Grace Cathedral was a magnificent setting for the ordination service. The pageantry and liturgy were beautiful as many of the St. James congregation gathered to see the Reverend Merry Chan Ong take the final step in her ordination process.

The following day, Sunday June 7th, Merry celebrated Eucharist and preached at St. James, which was truly a joyous occasion. Afterwards her Vocations Committee—Bethany Baugh, John Gallagher, Pat Mayer, Jim Gregg, Deborah Sham, and Elizabeth Nelson—threw us a wonderful lunch. Thanks to everyone who brought salads, including Judy Spain, John Harrison, Eliza McFarland, Mary Ann Faris, Carole Jan Lee, Marjorie and Richard Matthews, Ebe Metcalf, Celeste Leitch, Will Gregory, and Margaret Stark-Roberts. More thanks to those who brought other treats, and to all those who helped with set-up and clean-up—including many of the people listed above, as well as Taylor and Ryszard Pochron and Andrew Hom.

Following this lovely meal we called the Semi-Annual Parish Meeting to order, and the Rev. Won-Jae Hur led us in a group meditation on Scripture. Anne Purcell did a great job of providing a concise but detailed briefing on the current state of St. James’s finances. Claudia Lewis, Chair of the Community Learning Center, joined Anne to present an overview of the CLC programs, major milestones on the CLC timeline, and a summary of the feasibility study completed by Ventura Partners. (See pages 4 and 5 for an outline of both reports.) We then moved to table discussions facilitated by trained Vestry Members. Parishioners at each table discussed three questions: What are three strengths of the CLC? What are three challenges of the CLC? What is the relationship of the CLC to the larger call of St. James Church? Each table selected a representative to report to the whole meeting, and the responses were captured by Helen Lantz, the Clerk of the Vestry. These responses appear in this Journal (p. 6), and will also be posted in the Parish Hall.

The Vestry will be looking very closely at what was said, and will be meeting to make decisions on how best to move forward. I want to reassure you that each Vestry member has a voice, and each one of these remarkable people brings a lot of experience and wisdom to the table and has the greater good of St. James at heart. Please continue to talk with us and share what you are thinking, as well as any ideas and/or concerns you may have.

On June 8th the Vestry met with Bishop Marc, Canon Michael Barlowe and Jim Forsythe. We had a wonderful open discussion with the team from the diocese and talked

extensively about what we heard from you all on Sunday. Another topic was the complex organizational and financial structures we currently have at St. James. We also spoke a little about Area Ministry. Bishop Marc has promised us support as we take our next steps and come to decisions for the future.

The Rector Search Committee also held their organizational meeting on June 8th and elected Ann Rieger-Matthews and Jan Vennari as co-chairs. Please see Jan's article below.

On Sunday June 14th we had a wonderful breakfast to celebrate John Gallagher, and presented him with a gift certificate so that he and Nan can have a short stay in Monterey. Big thanks to everyone for keeping this surprise party a secret, and especially to Liza Colton, Mary Ann Faris, and Nan Gallagher for working so hard to create such a loving and warm celebration.

By the time you read this, the Vestry will have met with the Board of St. James Preschool to hear about their plans for some renovations. And the barbecue celebrating Carole Jan Lee will have happened! There will be lots more to report in the next Journal.



Rector Search Committee is Established

By Jan Vennari

The 11-member Committee tasked with recommending candidates to be our next St. James Rector is up and running. The Vestry chose the Search Committee from a number of interested nominees. The group was commissioned in church on April 26, and then met with the Vestry on May 17 to receive its overall direction.

The Search Committee is composed of people who care deeply about St. James. Each member comes with his/her own life experiences at St. James, so that the group represents a healthy cross-section of the congregation.

The Committee's members are Giselle Bosc, Louise Newlin, Carol Overman, Elia Pochron, Ann Rieger-Matthews, Judy Spain, Elizabeth Sturcken, Jan Vennari, Roger Wickstrom (Vestry representative), Ed Wilcox, and Warren Wong.

The Committee officially met for the first time on June 8 at a get-acquainted and planning meeting at Giselle Bosc's home, where Ann Rieger-Matthews and Jan Vennari were chosen as co-chairs. Immediate next steps are to meet

with Canon Michael Barlowe of the Diocese of California for training and information about the overall selection process, and then to create an action plan to develop the church's Parish Profile.

Please see any Search Committee member if you have questions.

Sunday Clubs Update

By Kathy Henry and Carla Cooper

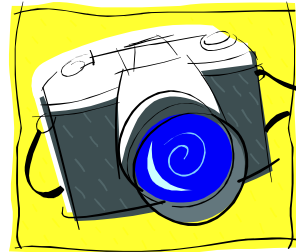
Sunday Clubs continues through the summer in the Caldwell Room. We start with a class based on the day's readings with parent volunteers, followed by crafts with Elia, Communion upstairs with the congregation, and special "kid fellowship" snack time during coffee hour.

The Nursery is open each Sunday with our new caregiver Hansel Maass, who will be joined this summer by our own Phoebe Winn.

Please join us!

St. James Photo Contest

EXTENDED UNTIL JULY!



Calling all Shutterbugs!
Submit BLACK & WHITE photos of life at St. James

Winning photos will be enlarged, framed,
and displayed in the Office Building!

Submit as many photos as you wish.
Put your name and phone number on the back
of each photo and put them in the designated
box in the Narthex.

The contest will be judged by vote at St. James—
Date TBA! Watch the Weekly News for details.

Questions? Contact Rose Scarff
at 415-460-1615 or Rose.Scarff@gmail.com

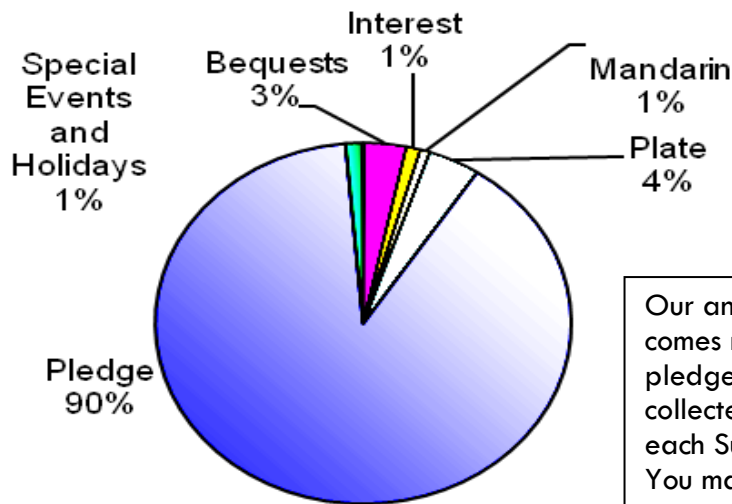
Highlights from the Semi Annual Meeting on June 7, 2009

Summary Prepared by Anne Purcell, St. James Treasurer

Finances at St. James

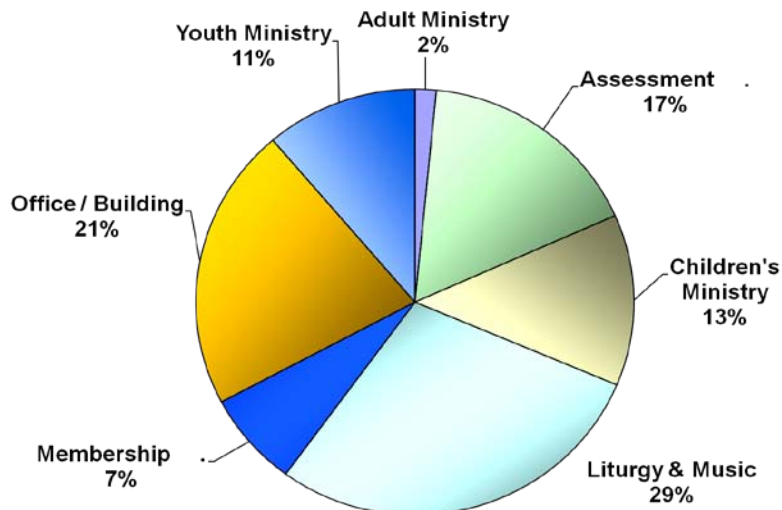
2008 Financial Year End Summary				2009 Mid-Year Status			
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance		Budgeted	Actual	Variance
Total Income	\$401,911	\$406,743	\$ 4,832	Total Income	\$175,775	\$156,181	\$(19,594)
Total Expenses	\$407,465	\$401,364	\$ (6,101)	Total Expenses	\$142,221	\$132,060	\$(9,571)
Variance			\$10,933	Variance			\$(10,023)

Sources of 2008 Income



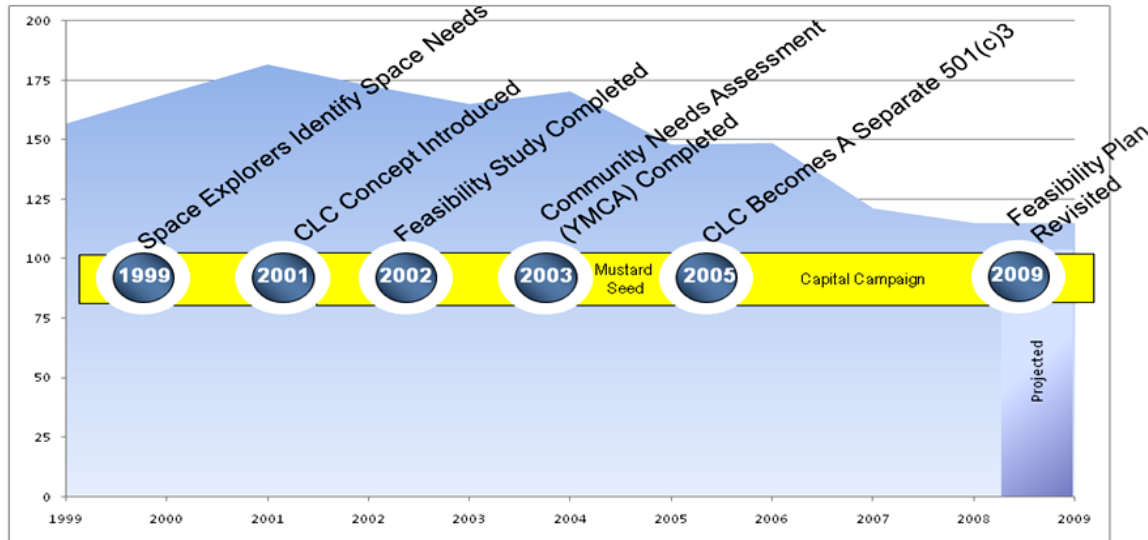
Our annual income comes mainly from pledges and what is collected in the plate each Sunday. You make St. James happen!

Where We Spent our 2008 Treasure



Our expenses are mainly salaries, with the exception of the Diocesan Assessment. We estimate how people spend their time, and allocate it to various ministries.

CLC Timeline and St. James Attendance 1999-2009



The CLC project is starting its 10th year, and it's a good time to look back. The bar across the page shows key milestones. The graph in the background shows the average Sunday attendance at St. James. In 1999, we averaged 180 people. Now, average attendance is 115. The last milestone, "Feasibility Plan Revisited," is the Ventura Report, which looked at the project in light of the current market conditions.

Highlights from the Ventura Report (Feasibility Study)

- CLC Board's question for the study: **Can we afford the building after it's built?**
- Key aspects of report:
 - Standard operating costs of running this type of building
 - Costs to build the building and debt to complete building
 - Services provided
 - Typical revenues for floor space / building type
 - Property management plan
- Did **NOT** consider feasibility of fundraising

Highlights from Finance Commission's Report – Key Assumptions

- The partners support the budget increase to \$5.7million up from \$5.3 million
- The fundraising goal has increased to meet the increased budget
- Church is able and willing to obtain a 10-year loan for \$1 million, amortized over 25 years
- St. James will be able to refinance the remainder on the loan within the 10-year period and service the debt for the foreseeable future
- St James Preschool rent will increase to \$66K, a figure greater than the \$52K the Preschool Board has indicated it would accept
- A full-time tenant will be found to occupy the available space on the second floor, which the Preschool indicates it no longer needs
- \$87K outlined in the post construction operating budget can be obtained from one-time, hourly, or weekly rentals
- The church can afford an increase in rent to \$32K from \$2.5K by 2013, which represents a 225% increase in the median stewardship, growth in membership, or a combination of the two
- The additional \$37K needed for the CLC's annual budget can be raised through additional rent or other sources

Table Discussions at the Semi-Annual Parish Meeting on June 7th Summary Prepared by Helen Lantz, Clerk of the Vestry

Strengths of the CLC

- Diversity of programs
- Strong children's and youth programs and St. James Preschool
- Meets unmet needs in the community and serves the broader community
- Allows St. James members to be of service to the community, and fosters community within St. James
- Raises community awareness of St. James in a "non-church" way and in general reflects well on St. James
- Provides services and education for all ages, which is the embodiment of St. James values
- Shows St. James as a leader/unifier/convener throughout community
- Helps fulfill the mission of St. James
- Dedication and commitment of St. James to the CLC—raised \$1.4 million!
- New building will provide more space for current and new programs
- Already have skilled/talented people to ensure success of the project
- Location, location, location!

Challenges of the CLC

- Money:
 - Raising funds needed in challenging economic times
 - Structure/fundraising challenge because of strong church affiliation
 - Risk of failure and taking on a mortgage/tearing down a building we can't afford to rebuild
 - \$1 million challenge grant key
- Time and timing:
 - current economic environment
 - project already in its 8th year
 - St. James focus on new Rector, reduction in attendance and pledges
- People to do it—is there enough energy and commitment to push forward?
- Membership of St. James could further erode during construction
- Sustaining the belief that the project will happen and can sustain post-construction
- Managing multiple and diverse programs, and multiple tenants
- Parking (lack of)
- Developing relationships with other potential partners for programs and as tenants
- Marketing/getting the word out

CLC's Relationship to the Larger Call of St. James Church

- Allows church and community to come together, meeting needs of both
- Connects and gives St. James greater exposure to the broader community
- Answers St. James's call to outreach and radical inclusivity
- Principle of CLC is St. James's core sense of being—a place and programs where children and adults can learn values and grow spiritually
- Partners need a clear understanding of St. James mission—St. James has to be the focal point
- St. James needs strong leadership for the Rector search and transition—CLC project could be a detriment to Rector search
- CLC has shifted focus away from St. James—need to focus on congregation
- Be a church first, then grow outward—CLC could fuel membership
- Ensure that St. James mission is not diluted by CLC



COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER ONGOING CLASSES AND EVENTS

For Children and Youth

Saturday Learning Time

Call 415-751-1199 for information.

Kindermusik and Advanced Kindermusik

Contact Dee Dee Lawton at 415-561-9754.

ASPIRE Summer School Program

Call Merry Chan at 415-823-2622.

Suzuki Music Lessons

Call 415-412-6723 for information.

Homework Help Center

Contact Nayad Abrahamian at 751-1198 to volunteer.

For Adults

Buddhist Meditation

Wednesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Overeaters Anonymous

Sundays 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. in the Caldwell Room.
Tuesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Debtors Anonymous

Tuesdays at 6:00 – 7:00 in the Caldwell Room.

No Pain, No Gain?

By Tina Smelser, MFT
California Counseling Institute

On a recent trip to visit family, I spent an evening with my cousin, her husband, and their 8-year-old daughter whom I'll call Darla. Darla had recently gotten her ears pierced, after a bad experience the previous year when the piercings had become infected and had to be allowed to close up. This time things were going well, and she was looking forward to wearing some fun new earrings once the healing period was over.

The night I visited, as Darla was doing her bedtime rituals, she noticed that her earlobes were bleeding slightly and that they hurt. Her parents agreed that the earrings needed to be taken out to prevent the possibility of infection. Darla adamantly refused, afraid that she wouldn't be able to bear the pain—even though we explained to her that any discomfort would be brief, and much less serious than the pain that might develop if they weren't removed.

We spent an hour or so trying various strategies. (How many therapists does it take to remove an 8-year-old's earrings?) These included letting Darla say what she thought would help (giving her a sense of agency and power), using ice (numbing the pain), watching TV (distracting from the pain), breathing deeply (relaxing the body and changing the focus), making sounds together (healing vibrations plus a sense of support). Finally Darla was able to face the momentary pain of removing the earrings. Afterwards she felt proud and relieved.

In the days and weeks since, this experience has stayed with me as I wondered if I could make some links between this experience of physical pain (including the fear of it) and the experience of psychological or emotional pain. I began to realize that pain is complex, and a difficult subject about which to make generalizations.

My first thought was that we often try whatever we can to avoid psychological and emotional pain, because we are afraid we won't be able to handle it. However, this can often lead to worse pain than we would have experienced by facing the original discomfort head-on. In addition, as with Darla's earrings, we might find that the pain wasn't as

bad as we had feared. This thought was corroborated recently in my work with a client who knew with all her mind and heart that she had to break up with her boyfriend, but was so afraid of how much pain they both would feel that she kept not doing it. This process probably caused more drawn-out suffering than if she had been honest. She likened the experience to the fear of “pulling off a Band-Aid,” something we may all remember from childhood.

I often point out to my clients that as children we develop strategies to cope with pain (defense mechanisms such as denial, projection, and so forth). These strategies help us hold together in childhood, but sometimes keep us stuck as adults. I help my clients to realize that often they are able to tolerate more pain than they thought. If one continues to avoid the pain, it remains alive, and may come out in different ways.

I wanted to make some solid arguments for experiencing the pains that can lead to new growth. But then I realized that the opposite can also be argued, as people can sometimes dwell in pain and may need to make a point of focusing on the positive. For the sake of brevity I am concentrating here on situations where it is beneficial to face one’s pain more directly. I also add the caveat that,

in the case of trauma, you want to be careful about how much you open up and may want to seek professional help.

Therapy can help one deal with pain in several ways. Simply expressing the pain can be healing, especially when witnessed by a caring, understanding person. One is no longer all alone with it. Having someone name and non-judgmentally allow those feelings can feel like a weight being lifted. It can also be healing to realize that one’s pain is normal, that there are valid reasons for it, and that one need not add layers of shame and guilt to the existing pain.

I hope this article may inspire you to be curious about your experience of emotional and psychological pain. If you know that you tend to run from it to temporary fixes that have their side effects (e.g. food, overwork, or mind-altering substances), try staying a bit longer with the feelings before pushing them away. Notice how you experience the pain. Is it a sensation in the body, a mental “tape” repeating that you are an awful person? You may find that if you feel the pain more fully, it changes. You can then let go of it. In doing so, you may open up your range of emotions to include more joyous feelings as well.



San Francisco Village

OUR GENERATION. OUR CHOICE.

JULY EVENTS

All those interested in San Francisco Village are invited
Please RSVP! Call (415) 387-1375

Tuesday, July 7th

“Conscious Grandmothering,” presented by Yeshi Neumann, CNM
6:00-7:30 p.m. Free Hosted by Mary Moore Gaines

Thursday, July 9th

Second Thursdays and Smart Money Choice Seminar #2:
“Multi-Generational Strategies to Protect What’s Important”
Speaker: Tammy Haygood of Edward Jones POTLUCK after the seminar!
6:00-7:30 p.m. Free—please bring a dish to share Hosted by Jeanne Lacy

Monday, July 13th

Docent Tour of Chagall Exhibit at the Contemporary Jewish Museum
12:00 p.m. Lunch at Café on the Square (self-pay)
1:00 p.m. Docent Tour (senior entrance fee \$8.00)
736 Mission (between 3rd and 4th Streets) Hosted by Marilyn Campbell

Thursday, July 23rd

SF Village Chat – Learn More about San Francisco Village
6:00 p.m. Free Hosted by Jeanette Gough

Conflict!

Sex, Religion, and Feminism

By James A. Turner

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

- Genesis 1:28

"Thou shall not kill." - Exodus 20:13

While human sex is both conflicted and controversial, the basic result of the human sex act—an embryo evolving into a fetus and then into a human being—seems even more wrapped in conflict now with the assassination of Dr. George Tiller in Kansas last month. The National Abortion Federation reported that he was the eighth abortion provider to be assassinated in the United States since 1977, and that 17 other providers have been targeted for murder. Abortion clinics, providers, and patients in this country have been targeted and harassed for years with little interference from federal or local law enforcement entities, in spite of a federal law prohibiting such behavior. Those who carry out the harassment and murders have been centered primarily within a small fanatical group of people who tend to be religious fundamentalists. This does not mean, however, that those who oppose abortion, the "pro-lifers," are all dangerous fanatics. They are not. However, there is a core group who are indeed violent anti-abortion activists.

Dr. Tiller told how he was influenced in providing abortion services by a nine-year-old girl who had been impregnated by her father. Dr. Tiller had two daughters at home at the time, one nine years old and the other ten years old. When he was explaining the problem, the ten-year-old daughter spoke up and said, "Daddy, a ten-year-old or a nine-year-old girl should not be pregnant and especially not by her father, grandfather, or uncle." When he thought of one of his own young daughters in that situation, he decided to help this little girl by performing the procedure. Eventually his practice became essentially one devoted to abortions. He was one of only three doctors in the United States performing late-term abortions for pregnancies after the 21st week. Why, you ask, would anyone abort a fetus at that late stage? Well, the answer is that these procedures are done either to protect the woman's life or health or because the fetus had some terrible deformity which could not be survived. An example of this would be a fetus with anencephaly, a congenital defect in which the brain simply doesn't develop.

Dr. Tiller was brought before grand juries and into court more than once, but was never found to be doing anything against the law. A jury of his own peers found him not guilty. So, while some people don't agree with abortion,

he practiced within the law. And the law? This was the Supreme Court's 1973 decision on *Roe vs. Wade*, and a companion case, *Doe vs. Bolton*, decided in conjunction. If you ask most people what *Roe vs. Wade* is, they would probably answer some variation of, "It was when the Supreme Court made abortion legal." Well, not quite.

In deciding *Roe vs. Wade* and *Doe vs. Bolton*, the Supreme Court found that most laws against abortion in the U.S. violated the right to privacy under the "due process" clause of the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution. *Roe vs. Wade* held that a mother could abort her pregnancy for any reason up until the point "at which the fetus becomes viable." *Viability* was a key point, and was usually considered to be 24 to 28 weeks of gestation. What was the Court talking about here? It was this: the Fourth Amendment gives all citizens of this country protection from "unreasonable search and seizure." A "seizure" occurs when the government takes control of an individual or something in his or her possession. However, in the Court's companion decision, *Doe vs. Bolton*, the Court held that an abortion after fetal viability had to be made available when needed to protect a woman's health. There has been controversy over this decision ever since.



The issue of abortion has become both religious and political, especially as we have seen the issues played out during the last eight years. And the plethora of questions surrounding abortion and contraception are as prickly as the quills of a porcupine. They are, it seems, legion. *When does life begin? Does it really begin only when the fetal brain has developed enough to produce measurable brain waves? After all, a common criteria of death is an absence of brain waves. Do advances in neonatal care for premature infants lower gestational viability below the 24 months considered by the Supreme Court in Roe vs. Wade? Why are so many anti-abortionists so opposed to the use of contraceptives that would reduce the number of abortions?* I have barely scratched the surface. More on these issues next month.

Where I'm From

By Barbara Burgess

There's a song by country-music artist Jason Michael Carroll called "Where I'm From." It describes a conversation between two unlikely people in which the singer is asked, "Tell me, son, where do you call home?" He responds by describing, not the physical location where he grew up, but the values he grew up with.

A friend of mine recently told me that he didn't really know where home was because his family, like so many, is spread out all over the country and no one from his family still lives in the house where he grew up. I, on the other hand, can chart most of my childhood within a twenty-mile radius of Saint James. There's the play yard where my friend Jamie and I rode tricycles and swung on swings. I was confirmed at Saint James by former Bishop Swing, and took my first Communion from the late Reverend Max Christensen. I joke that Saint James is like the mafia—you never truly leave. When mom and I moved to Marin in 1985 we tried attending Episcopal churches in Marin but came back to Saint James because it was "home." I know of former members of Saint James who moved to Arizona, and promptly found the Episcopal parish where a former Saint James seminarian served as priest. Our former Rector Peter Lawson still contributes articles to the Saint James Journal. Mary Moore Gaines, although retired as well, still serves on the Board for the Community Learning Center at Saint James.

What is it that draws us here? Why do we keep coming back? As Jason Michael Carroll sings, "It's where [we're] from."



I see myself in this place.

I see the place where I found Jesus and where I questioned my faith.

I see my former Sunday School students, now young adults, making their mark on the world.

I see the stained glass window, once hidden in the obscurity of my preschool nap room, now prominently displayed in the church welcoming the newly baptized.

I see myself and my friends in the laughter of the preschool children in the yard.

I see myself teaching my very first class, not knowing yet that this was my chosen path.

I see myself in the faces and places of Saint James.



Gracious God, Source of all wisdom,
we ask you to summon our dreams
and our courage.

As we search for our new Rector,
we commit ourselves to St. James' future:
the vision of what we might become.
Ground us in common love and Spirit,
and lead us into the ministry
you have called us to do,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thoughts While Shaving

By Ray Muñoz

Dear Les,

I received the news with open-mouthed disbelief. I gagged a bit, stumbled at forming a question, but all that came out was, "What?!" I had heard right: you had committed suicide.

(In the first place, let me thank you for not doing it at home where your wife—my daughter—would find you. Going to the woods with your gun was the best thing to do ... heartless as this may sound.)

I did not know you terribly well. You entered my daughter's life late, and you and she led happy, private lives after you got married. I did know about you through others, and liked what I heard. You were solid, a good and moral man, a go-to-for-help kind of guy, and best of all you adored my daughter. My two granddaughters called you Pops. They were very fond of you and loved teasing you. It touched a Dad's protective instinct.

I now understand that you suffered from depression. You did take some pills that the doctor gave you, but evidently you may have expected an immediate rush of relief, and that did not happen. You may have just given up on them. Like so much of all of this, we just don't know.

We do know that your mother may have paved the way years ago when you were young by taking her own life, as did a cousin later. All this may have legitimized the recourse to suicide in your mind. We can guess, but again, we just don't know.

I'm thinking that the excruciating pain you felt drove you to do this. Living was just too terrible to contemplate. You forgot about your wife and everyone else. Hell wasn't just a word. It was what you were living.

I can visualize you going to your car and driving off with frenetic energy to find a place that was suitable. I can also imagine you looking at the barrel of the gun as the one thing that would end your deep and dark mental torture.

Well, you know what, Les? We all got a message and a lesson out of all of this. We agree that we will never ever attempt suicide. We will never ever put anyone we love in this kind of situation.

You see, Les, with all the various forms that our pain can take in a situation like this, one form stands out: real, teeth-gritting anger. Sorry, but that's the truth.

It isn't as if you had died in an accident or from a disease or plain old age. You chose to end this relationship, and that's what makes us angry. Very angry....

Don't you see? We were not able to offer help. We are left with more questions than answers. How could you? We depended on you for friendship, companionship, taking out the garbage, picking up some groceries, going fishing, playing with the kids, being a good neighbor, cooking steaks on the grill, sharing a few brews, being a solid trustworthy workman, fixing anything.... I depended on you to keep my baby safe, happy, and satisfied in a good working relationship.

Damn right we're angry....

And to top it all off, now we are agitated by thoughts that we don't like and that corrode our hearts. We know our anger isn't going to get us anywhere. Our anger will just push people away from us when we want to seek peace and understanding. Forgiving you and trying to put ourselves into your situation is the first thing we have to do. Forgiving you is the first step in the process of healing.

So, Les: I forgive you ... and I know that God will grant you the peace that you so longed for. Peace. Rest in peace, Les. I really mean it. Peace.

Now God, a lot of people need you, but specially my daughter needs you. Take care of her. Encourage her to acknowledge her anger, then console her and let her find her peace too, so that she remembers only the good parts of that phase of her life. She is a smart lady and a strong woman and she is really trying to sort it all out.

I also ask that you work on me. I too am trying ... but frankly, God, I need a nudge.

Shalom



Hope and the Committee

By Elizabeth Nelson

I feel a little awkward bringing this up. There's no way I can describe it that doesn't invite a false impression.

So let me start by saying, up front and for the record, that I do *not* hear voices in my head. Really, I don't.

Except that I do. Well, technically what I hear is a running mental commentary in my own voice, critiquing my every decision and action during the course of a day and pointing out each shortcoming: should have worked harder on this, shouldn't have eaten that, should have stood up to him, should have been more patient with her, tried too hard here, too cowardly to step up there, never going to be as charming as she is or as sociable as they are, never going to be anything really except Too Much or Not Enough. Some days the commentary is a background mutter, some days it's nearly all I can hear in my head; it almost never shuts up completely.

Years ago, when I started to become aware of this mental habit as a habit, I managed to ask myself, "Elizabeth, if anyone else talked to you the way you talk to yourself, would you stand for it? Would you let anybody talk like that to someone you love?" Those questions didn't stop the commentary, but they did allow me to take a step back and objectify it a little, to give a name to the source of the trash-talk so that maybe I could start talking back. I had friends who referred often to their Inner Critic or their Evil Twin, but the label that stuck with me was simply the Committee. The sheer variety of shame-tinted memories, relentless judgments, and gloomy predictions made it easy to imagine multiple "voices," even if all the voices were really my own.

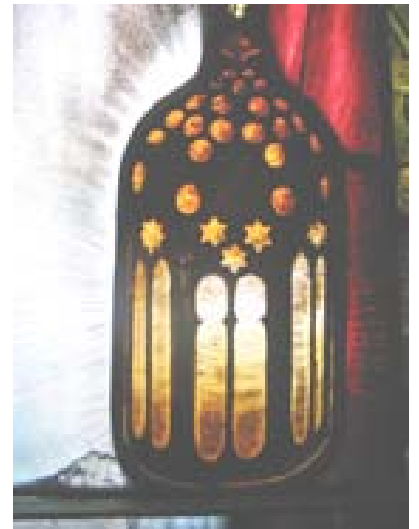
Naming the Committee turned out to be the easy part. Trying to talk back to them, or even—God save the mark—get them to shut up for a few minutes at a time, has been ... well, it's been a process. Laughing at them helps, it turns out, and composing snotty memoranda to them in my diary. It helps to spend time around people who love me, to make a deliberate habit of remembering what their love looks and sounds like. Prayer helps, immersion in the Presence and the story of Jesus the Healer who was—is—so phenomenally rooted and grounded in the love of God. And with all that ... well, I still hear voices in my



head. The Committee has not adjourned. But there are fewer days when their meetings get really raucous, and more questions I can ask myself in the midst of days like that—questions like, "Am I sure this is fact, or could it be opinion?" and, "True or not, will concentrating on this thought help me do a better job of getting through the day?" More questions that help to quiet the Committee down if not shut them up, help to make room in my mind for the truth of love and hope.

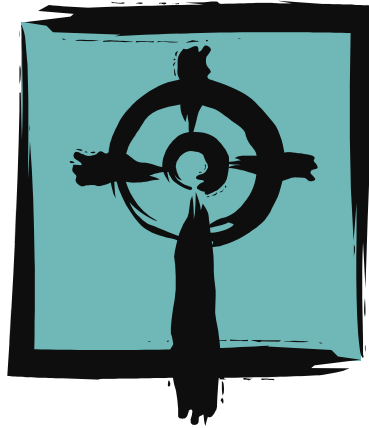
Why am I telling you this? Because it's a way to start talking about healing and deliverance, topics that we who worship Jesus the Healer should never need to shy away from. If you don't have a Committee or Inner Critic in your own head—and I sincerely hope you don't—you may know someone who does show signs of being so afflicted ... if not by shame and self-doubt, then possibly by anxiety, or resentment, or negativity, or any of the legion of other endlessly hurtful, endlessly re-named "spirits" who have tormented humankind for centuries, and whose newest names, bestowed by psychology, roll off our tongues as glibly as the term "demon" rolled off the tongues of Jesus' contemporaries. How much time and energy do we spend wrestling with these spoilers, and how often do they manage to distract us from the work of loving God, our neighbor, and ourselves? Is it possible to believe that God would be anything less than utterly delighted to deliver us from them, and help us heal the damage they've done in our lives?

"Lord, if You will, You can make me whole" ... *can adjourn the Committee once and for all, can mend my broken confidence by focusing it on You, can ground me so completely in Your love that my ability to love others is finally, wholly restored.* That prayer for wholeness belongs to each one of us whenever we need it, to pray in our own words and from our own wounded hearts, out of our own afflictions. God hears each time one of us prays it. And healing comes; quickly or slowly, as we wrestle with our demons and seek help from those who love us and offer our struggles and prayers and hopes to God who loves us even more, we are delivered and made whole. Take it from the woman with voices in her head: healing comes.



CALENDAR

- July 12 "Mothers Helping Mothers" meeting after 10 a.m. service
- July 19 Holy Eucharist and Prayers for Healing for the World
at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. services
- Vestry meeting after 10 a.m. service – all are welcome
- July 26 Celebrate the Feast of St. James!
Parish Picnic after 10 a.m. service



**The St. James Community Journal is a monthly publication of
the Community Center at St. James, whose partners include:**

St. James Episcopal Church

Rev. Won-Jae Hur, Interim Rector
4620 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.751.1198
fax 415.751.1545
stjames@stjamesf.org
www.stjamesf.org

St. James Preschool

Roger Setterfield, Head of School
4620 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.752.8258
rsetterfield@stjamesf.org
www.stjamespreschoolsf.org

The Community Learning Center

at St. James
4620 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.751.1199
www.clcstjames.org

The California Counseling Institute

Elaine Chan-Scherer,
Executive Director
4614 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.752.1702
ccpsyche@earthlink.net
<http://californiacounseling.org>

**We welcome your articles
on or before the 15th
of the month.**

Submit articles to:
elizabethn@jfcf.org

Editor:

Elizabeth Nelson

Production and Distribution:
Andrew Hom, Elizabeth Nelson,
Erazm Pochron, and Judy Spain

